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Submission to City of Melbourne Transport Strategy Refresh Discussion Papers July 2018

Introduction

Thank you for consulting Victoria Walks in the process of the Transport Strategy Refresh 2018.

Victoria Walks applauds the City of Melbourne for developing discussion papers with a range of innovative approaches for improving transport options in the City. Given the high rates of walking in the city (89% of all trips in the Hoddle Grid and 66% of trips across the municipality¹), particularly important elements include:

- Addressing pedestrian crowding around key public transport nodes.
- Implementing a pedestrian priority CBD where delays at traffic lights for pedestrians are minimised.
- Removing clutter from footpaths to improve disability access, public safety and efficiency of movement.
- Removing on-street parking spaces and building wider footpaths to provide more space for pedestrian movement, outdoor dining, street life and more trees.
- Applying the Barcelona 'Superblocks' model to sections of the Hoddle Grid.

Taken together, the discussion papers point to a future where people are given a higher priority than vehicles. Victoria Walks strongly supports this. We need a major re-allocation of CBD street space and time (eg. at traffic lights) to deliver on those priorities.

Victoria Walks notes that many of the issues raised in the discussion papers were also contemplated in the City of Melbourne Walking Plan from 2014-2017 – an excellent, forward-thinking document. However, action to implement the Walking Plan has been very limited. The transformative change envisaged by the Walking Plan has not been realised.

¹ City of Melbourne, *Discussion Paper on Walking*, VISTA 2016, p.1

Action to implement the Walking Plan and the refreshed Transport Strategy should not be left to ad hoc decision making on individual projects. There needs to be a regular, ongoing financial commitment to actually delivering on these plans.

Victoria Walks strongly urges Council to ensure any future Transport Strategy contains a well-resourced action plan to provide for the transformation of at least three street blocks each year.

Recommendations

1. Ensure any future Transport Strategy contains a well-resourced action plan to provide for the transformation of three city blocks each year.
2. Apply the model of the Barcelona 'Superblocks' to sections of the Hoddle Grid, with shared spaces for walking, cycling, deliveries and residential access. This should include the area bordered by Queen St, Lonsdale St, Flinders St and Exhibition St.
3. Dramatically improve pedestrian spaces and connectivity around CBD train stations, including the suggestions for Flinders Street, Southern Cross and Flagstaff Station set out in this submission.
4. Assess pedestrian delay at intersections across the city and develop a prioritised list of projects to reduce it, focusing on the busiest intersections first.
5. Install raised thresholds on all 'little' street intersections with main streets (eg. Little Bourke and Little Lonsdale Streets at Swanston St).
6. Raise pedestrian crossings on all 40kmh streets.
7. Ensure all signalised intersections have pedestrian facilities on all legs (eg. Russell and Flinders Sts and Rathdowne and Queensberry Sts).
8. Assess the municipality for locations where improvements should be made to improve access for older pedestrians.
9. Ensure that that the design of driveways and accessways maintains and enhances the integrity of the footpath and does not delay pedestrian movement, including avoiding use of new traffic signals.
10. Consider issues of personal safety in streetscape design, especially streetlighting to address locations where women feel unsafe in the City.
11. Dedicate footpaths to walkers, provide separate cycling facilities and advocate for enforcement action in response to illegal cycling on the footpath.
12. Prohibit motorcycle parking:
 - a) On congested footpaths (eg adjacent to railway stations)
 - b) Next to the building line, where they may impede pedestrians with vision impairment
 - c) Where motorbikes are typically ridden on the footpath to access them (eg Superstop on south side of Bourke St, east of Swanston St).

13. Investigate options to promote, implement and enforce the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council *Guidelines for Parking Motorcycles and Scooters on Footpaths*.
14. Ensure that new tram stops are designed to facilitate pedestrian movement across the street and access to trams, with no fencing or other obstructions to crossing the road, with any private vehicles required to give way to boarding passengers.

The rationale behind these recommendations is explained in the remainder of this submission.

Background – Victoria Walks

Victoria Walks is a walking health promotion body working to get more Victorians walking every day. Our vision is for vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible.

Our cities, towns, neighbourhoods and urban areas have become largely automobile dependent and less walkable. This has contributed to the emergence of more sedentary lifestyles in which Victorians do not engage in the recommended levels of physical activity. Physical inactivity is a significant factor in the dramatic rise in the levels of obesity and preventable diseases such as Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Walking-friendly neighbourhoods and urban spaces are essential to encourage and enable people to walk. Walking is associated with positive health outcomes, improved fitness and better physical, social and mental health. Making towns, cities and suburbs more walkable has many health, environmental and economic benefits.

Specific comments on the discussion papers

The following sections provide specific comment under the same headings that are adopted in the topical discussion papers forming this consultation phase of the Transport Strategy Refresh.

Walking

- Victoria Walks supports “car-free zones at pedestrian gathering places to protect pedestrians from vehicles and grow the local retail economy.”

Some streets in the CBD should be entirely free of traffic, at least at key times of the day. Genuinely pedestrian friendly cities like Copenhagen, Munich, Vienna and Dublin feature pedestrian only precincts where vehicles are permitted only during off-peak periods for deliveries. For the remainder of the day, these are pedestrian only spaces where people can relax and amble without having to be vigilant for vehicles.

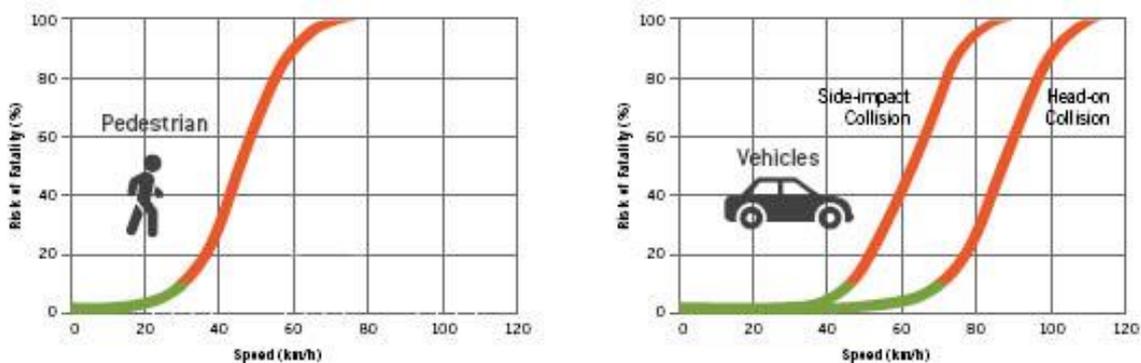
Part of Little Collins St is currently closed to traffic at lunch times, but the street is still primarily designed for vehicles, so largely fails to deliver a positive pedestrian experience, even during that limited period.

Current models of pedestrian streets in the CBD tend to be very small, narrow streets dominated by on-street dining – they are adult spaces. There is virtually nowhere in the Hoddle Grid where small children can walk, run or play freely without a risk from vehicles. Even spaces without cars, such as Swanston Street and Bourke St Mall, still have vehicles. There are playgrounds on the fringe of the CBD such as at Birrarung Marr, but children should not be marginalised.

There should be family friendly streets, including smoke free seating, in the heart of the city where children are free to play without risk from vehicles, including trams and bicycles (it is important to provide a network of safe cycling routes, but not all city streets or spaces need to be available for riding). This is critical if we want a truly inclusive city.

- Victoria Walks supports “a CBD-wide slow zone for vehicles. 30km/hr max speed limit in the Hoddle Grid and Docklands, with lower limits and car-free areas around pedestrian hotspots”.

The safety risks of higher traffic speeds and corresponding benefits of lower traffic speeds are well understood. The diagram below indicates the risk of fatality in various crash scenarios. We note that estimates of this nature vary, and should be considered indicative rather than definitive, but the impact of higher impact speeds is clear. The probability of death for a pedestrian hit at 40 km/h is about 30%, whereas at 30 km/h the probability reduces to about 10%.



Collision force and risk of fatality (Government of South Australia 2011)

- Victoria Walks supports “pedestrian priority CBD where delays at traffic lights for pedestrians were minimised across the municipality.”

Assessment of the timing of traffic signals is required to ensure that cycle times minimise delay, as envisaged in the discussion paper. Additional considerations at traffic lights are set out below.

The City should provide for the expansion of auto-on for pedestrians at all signals at all times. The City should also investigate audio-tactile volume options that allow operation at night.

In areas where auto-on is not in operation or proposed, late introduction (or late call-up) should be available. If not the walker (who may not be aware that they need to push the button) may well be forced to wait for a full cycle, even though the signals could allow them to cross without any inconvenience to other road users. This situation invites, almost requires, non-compliance.

At mid-block pedestrian operated signals, the responsiveness of the signals is often poor. The settings for these signals need to be reviewed to ensure there is minimal wait time.

Finally, signal operation should be reconsidered in locations where pedestrians have to wait through two cycles to cross the road – usually on very wide streets with multiple traffic streams and/or large central medians. Signals should allow walkers to cross the road in one movement.

- Victoria Walks supports the idea of “innovative design of streets and public places to make people safer from vehicles.”

City Spaces

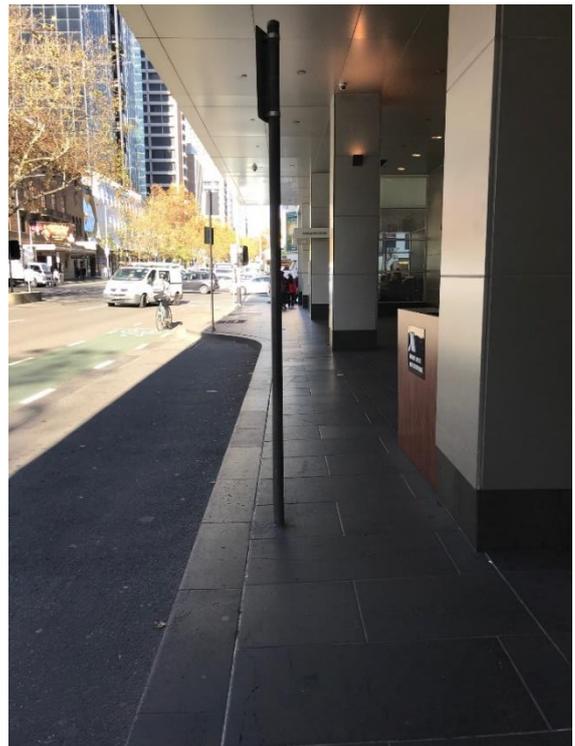
- Victoria Walks supports the “removal of clutter from footpaths to improve disability access and public safety.”

An example for improvement is the poorly placed signage pole outside the Melbourne Marriot Hotel on Exhibition St. It is adjacent to a pylon which blocks an already narrow footpath - the sign is unnecessary as there are already signs at each end of the parking bay.

- Victoria Walks supports the “removal of on-street parking spaces to build wider footpaths for pedestrians and provide more space for outdoor dining, street life and more trees”.

Victoria Walks supports the “application of the Barcelona ‘Superblocks’ model to sections of the Hoddle Grid, with 10km/h shared spaces for walking, cycling, deliveries and residential access on Flinders Lane and Little Collins Street”. The application of ‘superblocks’ has the potential to build on Melbourne’s already iconic laneways and enhance a walkable, liveable culture.

We note, however, that there is no reason to limit the application of this concept to Flinders lane and Little Collins Street. Victoria Walks maintains a long-term vision for the city should include all ‘little streets’ (streets generally less than a 20 metre wide road reserve) within the Hoddle Grid as pedestrian spaces or shared spaces. It is unreasonable to continue to dedicate the majority of space in these narrow streets to exclusive use by vehicles, when the dominant mode of transport is walking. Any vehicle use of these streets should be oriented to property access – they should not have a through-traffic function and they should not have a parking function beyond loading or providing access to existing off-street car parking. On those streets where an ongoing traffic function needs to be retained during the day, the street should be a shared space based on the European model, with vehicles (including bikes) required to give way to walkers. This is not just



Poorly placed sign outside the Melbourne Marriot Hotel on Exhibition St

a walking for transport issue – this model will improve the liveability, tourism and economic potential of the city.

Some more substantial streets should also be re-conceptualised as shared space. Elizabeth Street is an excellent example. The traffic function of Elizabeth St has declined over time, but there has been little corresponding benefit to walkers, because it is still managed as a traffic street. Traffic signals require pedestrians to wait for often non-existent traffic, while tram super stops prevent mid-block crossing. Elizabeth St needs to be reconceptualised to prioritise people, as a shared street, with tram stop pedestrian fencing removed.

It may not be necessary to reduce speed limits to 10 km/h in shared streets. In Europe shared streets generally have a 20 km/h speed limit.

It is also important to ensure that adoption of the superblock concept does not mean that streets with a traffic function remain as they are. The streets on the edge of the Hoddle Grid all have a traffic function, but the CBD railway stations are also located on those streets. The streets around railway stations in particular need to have a reduced traffic function (see section below).

Victoria Walks suggests the area bordered by Queen St, Lonsdale St, Flinders St and Exhibition St should be considered as an initial location for a 'superblock.' While those four streets have a significant traffic function, the streets with that block, including Collins, Bourke and Elizabeth Streets should be managed primarily for their place function and for the movement of pedestrians and trams (where applicable).

Motor Vehicles

Victoria Walks supports the key proposals in the Motor Vehicles discussion paper:

- Cars which do not have a destination in the central city but are just travelling through, removed from the Hoddle Grid, releasing space for other uses.
- All major streets in the Hoddle Grid reduced to a single lane each way, maintaining property access and improving mobility for efficient modes.
- Traffic signal cycle times minimised across the central city to increase the efficient movement of people on foot, bikes and public transport.

Pedestrian spaces around train stations

Overcrowding at train stations is particularly acute around Flinders St Station and Southern Cross. These stations are major gateways to the city and patronage is only going to increase. The numbers of people walking on the streets around these stations, including interchanging with trams, is enormous. The need for overall efficiency of movement in the transport system demands that they be given priority over vehicles.

These gateway locations also have a critically important place function that is currently highly compromised by the priority afforded to vehicles. This is especially true of Flinders Street Station, which is one of the very few genuinely iconic locations of Melbourne. Even here, however, vehicles are given priority over people and pedestrian amenity, safety and convenience is poor.

Adjacent to Flinders Street Station, St Kilda Road should be closed to private vehicle traffic and the traffic function of Flinders St should be dramatically reduced, if retained at all. The area needs to be re-conceptualised as a public space with priority given to pedestrian and tram movement, not the current configuration of a suburban main road. If private vehicle access is retained, there should be only one lane in each direction, similar to the current configuration of Collins Street. If traffic signals are retained, the phasing needs to give much higher prioritisation to pedestrian movement. The design of the road should enforce very low vehicle speeds (max 30km/h).

A similar level of change is required at Southern Cross. Spencer Street should be largely closed to private vehicle traffic between Collins Street and Bourke Street. The end of Bourke Street should also be closed to private vehicles, to facilitate pedestrian access to the tram stop there.

Victoria Walks notes there are some minor works underway to improve the pedestrian access around Southern Cross, but they will not resolve the current problems. There is a need for major works to address the over-allocation of space and time to private vehicles. Transformational change is needed to tackle the serious overcrowding issue for pedestrians and improve overall efficiency of movement.

In addition to the need for significant works at these major gateways to the city, Victoria Walks nominates Flagstaff Station as an area that has significant potential for improvement.

Improving pedestrian space around Flagstaff Station

We are aware that the City of Melbourne is already considering possible changes around Flinders St and Southern Cross. Victoria Walks has therefore developed some specific suggestions for changes around Flagstaff Station, as another key location for pedestrian movement.

The footpath on the west side of William St between LaTrobe and Bourke Streets is overcrowded. The crowding is worse on the west side of William St partly because the exit for Flagstaff station is on the west side and partly because there are a lot of obstructions on the footpath – footpath trading, trees, bins etc, as illustrated in this [video](#). In addition to this, there is little storage space for pedestrians to cross William St – it feels easier to go with the flow than to stop and become another blockage on the footpath. This reduces the ability of pedestrians to easily disperse.

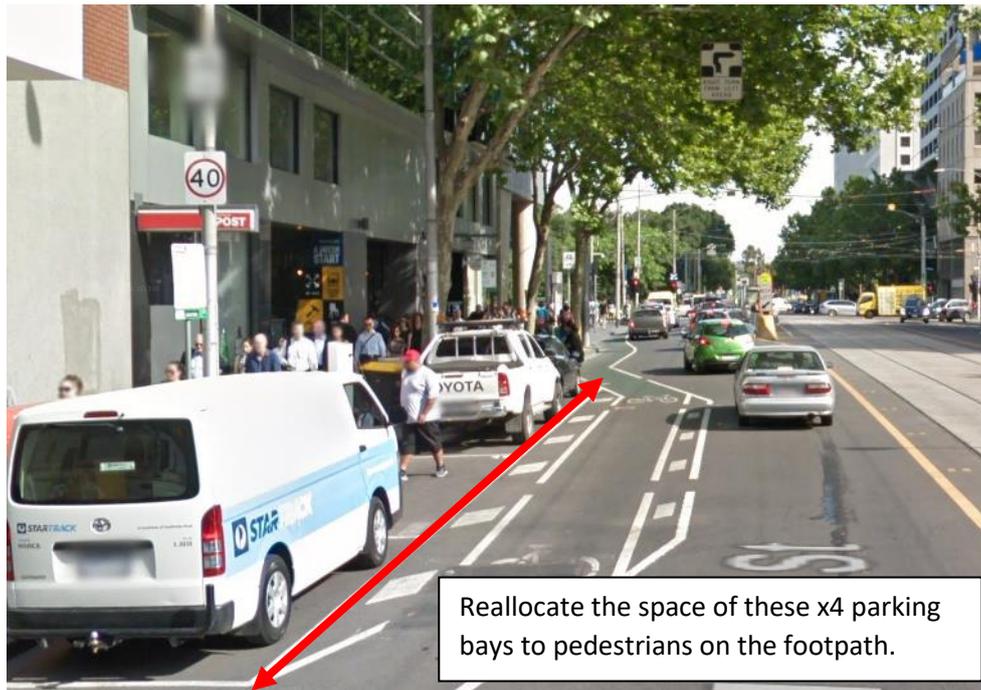
A comprehensive urban design process is needed to review the space around Flagstaff Station and consider issues such as better connecting to Flagstaff Gardens. However, we have set out some short term measures below that would address the immediate pedestrian crowding problem.

Options:

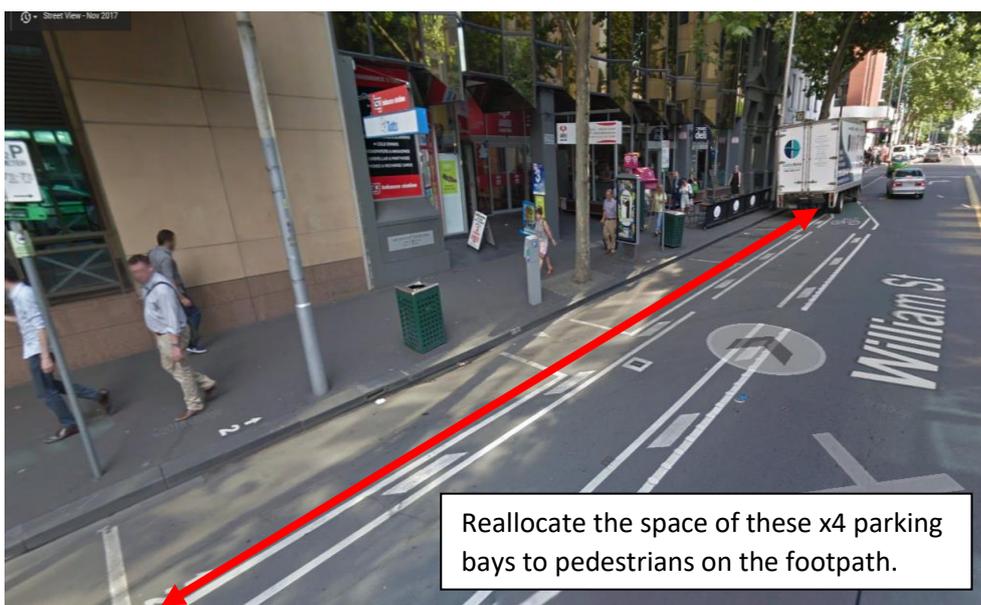
- Remove parking on the west side of William St between La Trobe and Little Lonsdale Sts (x4 bays) - and extend the footpath – including at the intersection of Little Lonsdale and William Streets.
- Remove parking on the west side of William St between Little Lonsdale St and Lonsdale St and extend the footpath – including at the intersections.
- De-clutter the footpath – audit the section between La Trobe and Bourke Sts and remove non-essential items.

- Investigate removing left turning car lane from William St into La Trobe St (SW corner) to enable footpath widening.
- Remove parking on the west side of William St between Lonsdale St and Bourke St.
- Reconfigure Little Lonsdale St between King and William streets to close access to William St, allowing for continuous pedestrian movement on the William St footpath; or otherwise redesign the William and Little Lonsdale intersection to require drivers to give way to walkers.
- Investigate extending the footpath on William St (east side) between La Trobe and Bourke Sts whilst maintaining the bus stops and provide a more protected bike lane.

William St between La Trobe and Little Lonsdale (west side):



William St between Little Lonsdale and Lonsdale Sts (west side):



Issues not addressed in the discussion papers

The discussion papers flag higher level concepts for re-designing city streets. In this section Victoria Walks sets out additional and/or more detailed issues that should be addressed in development of the strategy and its implementation.

1. Planning for ageing community

The Victorian population is rapidly ageing and older pedestrians are over-represented in falls in public spaces and women in particular are affected by falls – forming 58.0% of hospitalisations from falls².

An example of a location for better planning for an ageing community is on Rathdowne St adjacent to the Rathdowne Place Aged Care. The lights across Rathdowne St at the Carlton Baths are frequently ignored. Given Rathdowne St is 40 kmh, and the proximity of those with lower mobility, the crossing should have a wide, raised platform pedestrian crossing. In addition, there is a housing development aimed at independent living on Drummond St, facilities for pedestrians accessing Lygon Court should be improved with older pedestrians in mind.

The City of Melbourne should audit the municipality for other similar examples.

2. Increase and Improve Crossings

Victoria Walks recommends greater priority for pedestrians at crossings and intersections.

One way that pedestrian priority at intersections can be improved is through raised thresholds and raising pedestrian crossings. On main streets, raising the intersection effectively extends the footpath across side streets, forcing vehicles to slow and reinforcing the need for drivers to give way when turning. Raising pedestrian crossings (on 40km/hr streets) increases pedestrian priority and provides superior comfort to pedestrians. This tool should be more widely used in the City of Melbourne, including areas outside the Hoddle Grid.

Victoria Walks offers the below examples of where priority could be improved:

2.1 Little Bourke St

The design of the roadway around some pedestrian crossings is not ideal and poses a safety risk for walkers. The mid-block crossing on Little Bourke St between Russell and Swanston needs to be designed (e.g. kerb extension) so that vehicles, particularly delivery trucks cannot park in the no standing area immediately before the crossing. As the photo below depicts - trucks (illegally) park up to the crossing so that walkers coming from the south side are totally obscured until they are on the crossing.

² Victoria Walks, Falls-Related Injuries While Walking in Victoria, p.3



Little Bourke St between Russell and Swanston

2.2 Raised crossings at tram stops

Wherever possible (ie. when the crossing doesn't go straight onto the tram stop), tram stop pedestrian crossings should be raised to the height of the footpath. For example, the photo below shows that at the Bourke St pedestrian crossings between Russell and Exhibition Streets, an at grade crossing is possible to the tram stop.



Bourke St (south) crossing between Russell and Exhibition Streets with high step down

2.3 Rathdowne St north of La Trobe St

Inappropriate signage that is inconsistent with the road rules has the potential to undermine pedestrian safety. The issue with the splitting of Rathdowne St north of La Trobe, where signage advises pedestrians to give way to vehicles that would otherwise be required to give way to them under the road rules, has been raised numerous times with the City (e.g. Submission to the City of Melbourne Transport Strategy Update 2011). It is frustrating that the City recently altered this intersection without resolving the problem.



Poor street design resulting in signage that undermines road rules for pedestrians

2.4 Driveway entrances

Driveway entrances to buildings should not impede pedestrians. Ramps should be shorter and steeper for vehicles rather than vertically displacing pedestrians. This would ensure slower vehicle movements and give greater priority to walkers. Entrance path colour should match footpath colour to provide a visual clue to walker priority

New buildings should not be provided with traffic signals to allow vehicle access. The proliferation of traffic signals in the city is adding unnecessary delay for pedestrians.

2.5 Footpath Integrity

Attention needs to be given to footpath integrity on streets where walkers are the dominant mode. Some pram ramps impede the footpath and reduce pedestrian priority. An example of this is seen in the photo below of the crossing on Little Bourke St between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets. If crossings were raised, there would be no need for the ramp to encroach on the footpath and walkers, particularly elderly walkers, would be confident of the surface and looking for vehicles, not at their feet. The current design is a potential trip hazard for those walking along Little Bourke or using the crossing. Similarly, the large mid-block crossing on Lonsdale St between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets

should be a raised platform to footpath height as the present pram ramp grade is steep and slippery when wet.



Little Bourke St between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets



Bourke St (north) crossing between Russell and Exhibition Streets with pram ramp extending into footpath reduces footpath width and creates potential trip hazard.

3. Personal Safety

Victoria Walks urges Council to consider issues of personal safety in streetscape design, especially streetlighting. The Plan International work '[free to be](#)' highlighted many locations where women felt unsafe in the City. The City should review this and any other similar work to consider how the city can be altered to give women in particular an improved sense of personal safety.

4. Cycling

Victoria Walks supports the Council's efforts to encouraging cycling in the City and believes that more bicycles on the roads generally makes for a safer walking environment. Victoria Walks believes that as bicycles are vehicles they belong on the road, or on dedicated cycling paths.

Footpath space should not be given over to bicycles as has occurred with the creation of the Nicholson Street shared path, which is highly disadvantageous for pedestrians and not ideal for cyclists. It has also created the situation where many bike riders continue to ride on the footpath, and across signalised crossings, beyond the end of the shared path (e.g. crossing Victoria St and along Nicholson St). This is in part due to the mixed and confusing message the shared path sends to bicycle riders (where the path starts and ends and what riders legal obligations are).

Victoria Walks supports strongly the position taken by the City not to allow bicycles to be ridden in parks such as Carlton Gardens. Parks and gardens are not only pedestrian walking routes, they are spaces to sit, play, talk, relax, learn, play and have fun.

5. Motorbike parking

Between 2005 and 2010, in Victoria the registrations of motor bikes grew by 45% (ABS 2011). Similarly, there has been an obvious growth in the number of motorbikes coming into the CBD. This has resulted in a marked increase in the number of motorbikes parking on footpaths in inner Melbourne.

Victoria Walks acknowledge (but do not support) that the Victoria Road Rules generally allow the parking of motorcycles on footpaths. This raises two key issues:

- Motorbikes occupy valuable public space and may be parked in ways that obstruct pedestrians, delivery vehicles and public transport users.
- The majority of motorbike riders who park on footpaths ride their motorbikes for some distance along the footpath in order to park. This is illegal, but not policed.

The Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council have produced guidelines for parking motorcycles on footpaths (VMAC 2008), but these guidelines do not appear to be enforced or enforceable at the moment.

Councils are able to limit motorbike parking on footpaths in defined areas and that option needs to be exercised.

Victoria Walks believes motorbikes should not be parked on any footpaths, but we have provided recommendations that would control motorbike parking as a compromise option.

6. Tram stop design

Victoria Walks is concerned that standard tram stop design is failing to provide for the volume of passengers accessing trams in the city and impeding broader pedestrian movement. Conventional 'superstops' with fences and other structures create an impassable barrier to crossing the street. With new generation trams getting increasingly longer (45 metres), tram stops are becoming significant barriers to movement.

While pedestrian crossings are often provided at one or both ends, these crossings often do not provide for direct crossing of the road and where they are signalised they create unnecessary delays.

The design of these tram stops is implicitly vehicle oriented – pedestrians and tram passengers are corralled into confined spaces and kept away from the roadway so that this can remain dedicated to fast moving private vehicles. The space left for the tram stop is often inadequate to deal with the volume of people accessing trams. This suburban model of street design is not suitable for the city. CBD tram routes should be pedestrian priority spaces, not private vehicle spaces.

If you have any queries regarding this submission please contact Duane Burt, Principal Policy Advisor on dburt@victoriawalks.org.au or 9662 3975.